

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 501

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OTRA, MOTS, MU

SUBJECT: RAND COUNTERINSURGENCY EXPERT'S VISIT TO OMAN

REF: STATE 80429

1. RAND EXPERT GEORGE TANHAM HAD AUDIENCE WITH SULTAN SHORTLY BEFORE LEAVING OMAN AFTER APPROX TEN-DAY VISIT INCLUDING WEEK IN DHOFAR. POINTS HE STRESSED TO HM WERE THAT GENERALLY THE RIGHT THINGS ARE BEING DONE IN DHOFAR COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT, BUT THAT THERE SHOULD BE FRESH EMPHASIS ON BRINGING OMANIS ALONG MORE RAPIDLY TO DO THINGS THEMSELVES, ESPECIALLY ON CIVIL ACTION MANAGEMENT AND TASKS. HE RECOMMENDED SULTAN TIGHTEN SCREWS ON BRITISH EXPATRIATES TO MAKE TRAINING FUNCTION A FIRM CONDITION OF THEIR CONTRACTS, WITH RENEWAL ABSOLUTELY DEPENDENT ON THIS; OTHERWISE HE FEELS EXPATRIATES WILL HAVE EVERY INCENTIVE TO STAY IN PLACE. TANHAM COULD NOT SAY WHAT IMPACT THIS ADVICE MADE ON HM, BUT SAID QABOOS STRUCK HIM AS RATHER RECEPTIVE AND UNDERSTANDING.

2. TANHAM SPOKE OF THIS IN REVIEWING WITH AMBASSADOR APRIL 27 HIGHLIGHTS OF HIS VISIT. EARLY ON HE RECEIVED LENGTHY BRIEFINGS FROM CSAF PERKINS, INTELLIGENCE CHIEF HAZELDINE, AND SULTAN'S EQUERRY LONDON. IN DHOFAR HE WAS HELICOPTERED TO HORNBEAM LINE, RAKHYUT AND "HAMMER" AREAS OF WESTERN JABAL, AND TAKEN TO USUAL VEIL ACTION CENTERS (RAVENSROOST, WHITE CITY, TAWI ATAIR, ETC.) IN AREA NOW UNDER REHABILITATION. HAD
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LONG SESSIONS WITH VARIOUS REHAB AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICIALS.

ON RETURN TO MUSCAT HE MET WITH DEPUTY DEFMIN SAYYID FAHAR AND SULTAN'S DEFENSE LIAISON OFFICER MAJOR SALIM AL-GHAZALI.

3. THIS TRIP REPRESENTED TANHAM'S FIRST EXPERIENCE IN NEAR EAST, HE COMPARED BRITISH-LED CIVIL ACTION EFFORTS FAVORABLY WITH WHAT HE HAD EXPERIENCED IN MID-SIXTIES IN VIETNAM, BUT WAS CONCERNED ABOUT EXTREMELY LOW LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION BY OMANIS THEMSELVES IN ADMINISTERING THESE PROGRAMS. HE APPLAUDED PRESENT FOCUS ON TYING JABAL TOWNS AND CIVIL ACTION CENTERS TOGETHER BY IMPROVING ROADS AND TRACKS, AND SAID HE HAD DONE HIS BEST SHOOT DOWN THEORY HELD BY SOME IN DHOFAR THAT HOUSING PROGRAM FOR JABALIS SHOULD BE GIVEN EMPHASIS EQUAL TO IMPROVEMENTS IN TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS AT THIS EARLY STAGE. LARGE NUMBERS AND APPARENT HEALTH OF JABAL LIVESTOCK SURPRISED HIM GREATLY AND IMPRESSED HIM AS PROVIDING SOLID ECONOMIC BASIS FOR CARRYING REHAB PROGRAM FORWARD. TANHAM SAID HIS OBSERVATIONS CONVINCED HIM THAT BRITISH CIVIL ACTION OFFICIALS, WHILE CAPABLE, ARE NOT WORKING THEMSELVES OUT OF THEIR JOBS NEARLY FAST ENOUGH, AND THAT ALTHOUGH PROGRESS MIGHT BE SLOWED IF THEY TOOK TIME THAT IT TAKES TO TRAIN OMANI COUNTERPARTS, THIS ASPECT IS ESSENTIAL IN OVERALL POLITICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL TERMS. UNLESS OMANGOV INSISTS IT BE GIVEN GREATER EMPHASIS, AND PRODUCES DHOFARI OR OTHER OMANI CANDIDATES TO DO THIS WORK, TANHAM BELIEVES ANY SUCCESS ACHIEVED WILL NOT BE PERMANENT. (HENCE HE STRESSED THIS ASPECT IN AUDIENCE WITH SULTAN.)

4. TANHAM WAS ASTONISHED BY ULTRA-HAWKISH POINT OF VIEW ON DHOFAR WAR EXPRESSED VOCIFEROUSLY BY MAJOR AL-GHAZALI, WHO ARGUED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS TO BOMB ADEN AND OTHER PDRY CENTERS AND WIPE OUT THE PROBLEM AT ITS SOURCE RATHER THAN TO CONTINUE PRESENT "TIMID" COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORTS WHILE PDRY MARXISTS ARE INDOCTRINATING CLASS AFTER CLASS OF DHOFARI BOYS AT THEIR LENIN SCHOOL ACROSS THE BORDER.

5. TANHAM INDICATED HE EXPECTS TO HAVE NO CONTINUING ROLE IN OMAN COUNTERINSURGENCY. THOUGH HE MADE HIS PRESENCE KNOWN TO EMBASSY EARLY IN VISIT, HE SOUGHT NO ASSISTANCE. OMANI OFFICIALS HAVE NOT DISCUSSED HIS PRESENCE OR MISSION WITH US. TANHAM'S OBSERVATIONS SEEM TO US PRETTY MUCH ON THE MARK.
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